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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/NCE,
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TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVENIA ON CONTROLLING AVIAN FLU

REF: (A) STATE 209622

(B) LJUBLJANA 0757

(C) LJUBLJANA 0652

(D) LJUBLJANA 0614

1. (U) Summary: On 21 November, Econoff and Econ Assistant met with Simona Salamon, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer at the Slovene Veterinary Administration, to discuss Slovenia's efforts to control avian flu. Salamon has the lead in the GOS for all avian flu related matters. Following is a summary of the measures that the GOS has undertaken to increase Slovenia's preparedness. (Note: The Veterinary Administration has overall responsibility in Slovenia for avian flu, but Salamon was only able to address ref A animal-related questions. The Slovene Ministry of Health manages avian flu concerns related to human health. Due to an avian flu outbreak simulation currently being conducted, however, Slovene Health Ministry officials were unavailable to meet with Econoff this week and, therefore, ref A questions addressing human health will be answered septel.) End summary.

PREPAREDNESS/COMMUNICATION

2. (U) As reported ref B, as one of the prerequisites for EU accession, in 2004 Slovenia prepared a detailed action plan to address a possible avian flu outbreak. In October 2005, the plan was reviewed by the EU Commission and updated by the Slovenian Veterinary Administration. The plan offers precise, step-by-step instructions for government institutions on how to handle an outbreak of avian flu. The Veterinary Administration has posted this action plan on its website (<http://www.sigov.si/vurs/ai.php>) along with other useful information on avian influenza for the general public.

3. (U) Post notes that the GOS has been very forthcoming with information on avian flu. Open and frank discussions with GOS interlocutors in recent months lead Post to believe that, in the event of an outbreak, the GOS would do everything in its power to inform the public. There was widespread coverage and extensive information provided by the government in a suspected case of bird flu in October. Moreover, according to Salamon, one of the highest priorities of the GOS is ensuring its preparedness for any potential outbreak. Salamon noted that her job content of late is "all bird flu, all the time" and that her senior management is closely engaged with all activities.

4. (U) According to Salamon, Slovenia has worked very closely with the EU on bird flu issues prior to and since its accession. As a member state, Slovenia's legal structure as it relates to bird flu is harmonized with the EU. In addition to working with the EU on containment and response issues, Slovenia also cooperates closely with its neighbors, particularly Croatia, where cases of bird flu were recently confirmed. (Note: Since the confirmation of bird flu, poultry imports from Croatia have been banned. End note.) In addition, the Veterinary Administration cooperates very closely with the Ministry of Health's Public Health Section as well as with the police, fire brigade, and civil protection/disaster relief agency.

5. (U) As in other countries, the media report regularly on suspected avian flu cases in nearby countries as well as the Slovene responses to them. Media outlets have also carried reports discussing the possibility of similar occurrences in Slovenia. Brochures prepared by public health officials with information regarding avian flu have been distributed widely in health and other public institutions throughout urban and rural Slovenia. At the main international airport near the capital, posters with avian flu information have been placed throughout the building explaining to tourists how to lower the risk of infection and transmission of the virus.

SURVEILLANCE/DETECTION

16. (U) Slovenia's Veterinary Administration, according to Salamon, is very capable of identifying any new strain of influenza in the animal population. Salamon noted that the Administration has recently received positive reviews of its capabilities from both the EU and the USDA. Salamon told Econoff that the Slovene National Veterinary Institute performs all of the diagnostics for suspected avian flu cases in Slovenia. She said the Institute is

well equipped to do all necessary testing and that tests are completed within 72 hours. Salamon further said that, following tests in Slovenia, any suspected avian flu cases are then sent to the EU reference laboratory in Weybridge, U.K. Based on Post's discussions with the Veterinary Administration, it does not appear that Slovenia needs or seeks any assistance in bird flu subtyping from international or U.S.-based organizations.

RESPONSE/CONTAINMENT

17. (U) To the best of Post's knowledge, in the event of an outbreak of avian flu, the GOS is prepared to respond rapidly and take all necessary means to control spread of the disease. The aforementioned action plan spells out all the necessary guidelines to contain the spread of the disease through culling, disinfection, and limitations on animal movement. In addition, as reported ref B, the GOS has banned certain imports. Currently, imports of poultry (including eggs, feather products, and stuffed birds) and other birds are prohibited from the following countries: Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Laos, China and Hong Kong, Malaysia, Pakistan, Romania, Russia, North Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, and Croatia.

18. (U) On 14 October, Health Minister Andrej Brucan announced that Slovenia is preparing a stockpile of the anti-viral drug Tamiflu. Brucan said the Ministry would purchase sufficient stock to supply approximately one quarter of the population or roughly 500,000 doses. The Ministry expects to receive the drug in two separate consignments beginning in early 2006.

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